

In the Claims

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Please cancel claims 18 and 20.

Please add claim 21.

Please amend claims 1, 4, 9, 12, and 19 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A pair of underpants comprising a front part, a back part, a crotch part and two leg holes delimited by the parts, a releasable connection having two parts that join in an overlapped region when in a closed condition to connect the crotch part to the front part and form an edge portion of each of the leg holes and that are separated from one another when in an open condition to allow an opening to be formed in the crotch area, ~~said with one of the two parts of the releasable connection connected to the front part of the underpants and extending from one leg hole to the other; and including a flexible protection element fixed in place relative to the leg holes attached to an end of the one part of the releasable connection that is connected to the front part of the underpants so that the flexible protection element extends from an edge portion of at least one of the leg holes and is so configured to wrap around over and at least partly cover the edge portion of the at least one of the leg holes when formed by the releasable connection in the closed condition to thereby increase wearer comfort.~~

2. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the two leg holes are part of the opening formed in the crotch area in the open condition.

3. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element is attached to the outer overlapping part of the releasable connection and is adapted to fold around the edge portion of the at least one of the leg holes formed by the releasable connection when in the closed condition.

4. (Currently Amended) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element is made of one a material selected from the group consisting of cotton and;

~~nylon or any other material suitable for making straps or tapes worn against the skin, being relatively unstretchable and having a soft feel.~~

5. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element is in the form of one or more ribbons that cover the overlapped region in the closed condition.

6. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 5 wherein the ribbons have a length of about 15 mm to about 120 mm.

7. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element is an elongated loop of material.

8. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 7 wherein the loop has a length of about 95 mm to about 160 mm enabling the loop to hold diameters from about 30 mm to about 50 mm.

9. (Currently Amended) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element includes two separate sections with a first section attached to a first end of the releasable connection and configured to wrap around the edge portion of a first of the two leg holes formed by the releasable connection in the closed condition and a second section attached to a second end of the releasable connection and configured to wrap around the edge portion of a second of the two leg holes formed by the releasable connection in the closed condition.

10. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 1, wherein the flexible protection element is attached to the inner overlapping part of the releasable connection and is adapted to fold around the edge portion of the at least one of the leg holes formed by the releasable connection when in the closed condition.

11. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 10, wherein a portion of the flexible protection element is secured to an outer side of said underpants by a fastening component when in the closed condition.

12. (Currently Amended) A pair of underpants comprising a front part, a back part, a crotch part and two leg holes delimited by the parts, a releasable connection having two parts that join when in a closed condition to connect the crotch part to the front part and form an edge portion of each of the leg holes and that are separated from one another when in an open condition to allow an opening to be formed in the crotch area, said releasable connection extending from one leg hole to the other, and a first flexible protection element ~~fixed in place relative to the leg holes~~ extending from a first end of said releasable connection and a second flexible protection element extending from a second end of said releasable connection, the first and second flexible protection elements foldable to an inside of the underpants and separately foldable to an outside of the underpants, and when folded adapted to wrap around and at least partly cover the edge portion of at least one of the leg holes to thereby increase ~~comfort for a wearer~~ comfort of the underpants.

13. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 12, wherein the two leg holes are part of the opening formed in the crotch area in the open condition.

14. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 12, wherein said two parts overlap in said closed condition as an outer overlapping part and an inner overlapping part.

15. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 14, wherein the flexible protection element is attached to the outer overlapping part.

16. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 14, wherein the flexible protection element is attached to the inner overlapping part in the closed condition.

17. (Previously Presented) The pair of underpants according to claim 16, wherein a portion of the flexible protection element is secured to an outer side of said underpants by a fastening component when in the closed condition.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) The pair of underpants according to ~~any~~ claim 12, wherein the flexible protection element is in the form of a narrow elongated strip of a soft material suitable for wearing against the skin.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (New) The pair of underpants according to claim 12, wherein one of the two parts of the releasable connection is connected to the front part of the underpants and extends from one leg hole to the other, with the first and second flexible protection elements each extending from an opposed end of the one part of the releasable connection that is connected to the front part of the underpants so that each of the flexible protection elements extend from an edge portion of one of the leg holes and is so configured to wrap over and at least partly cover the edge portion of the leg hole when the releasable connection in the closed condition.